

Knowledge and skills of rubber tappers as a development resource in increasing the productivity and quality

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This study attempts to ascertain the knowledge (cognitive domain) and skills (psychomotor domain) of rubber tappers as a development resource, which is of paramount importance in increasing productivity and quality of rubber. A field survey of 160 rubber tappers in Horana, Deraniyagala and Mawathagama areas, was carried out. A structured questionnaire, direct field observations and informal discussions with tappers were used in the field survey.

Knowledge and skills are usually acquired through past training. Majority of tappers (70%) have not undergone any type of training programme during their career though they are experienced. Improper acquisition of skills and knowledge was clearly reflected even from the tapping panels and their tapping related activities. About 68% were willing to undergo further training.

More than 61% did not know that, latex flow decreases with time of the day, which is a fundamental. The study revealed that, nearly 80 % of tappers regard the rain guards as a problem. About 67% indicated the use of Ethral results in unproductive trees in the long run. Results also revealed that, 40% were not aware of the possible contamination due to improper placement of cups after latex collection. Only 38% of the tappers knew about at least two quality parameters, while 17% did not know any.

It is evident that, the most tappers were misled with some unscientific beliefs. The study also revealed that, almost all the tappers are in the lowest levels of the cognitive and psychomotor domains. Since there is a need for further training, proper and effective training will benefit the tappers for them to develop their knowledge and skills. As a development resource, if the cognitive and psychomotor domains of the tappers could be improved at least to the second level of each domain i.e. comprehension and manipulation respectively, the productivity and the quality could surely be enhanced.